

**THE ROLE OF METAPHOR IN THE DARWIN DEBATES: NATURAL  
THEOLOGY, NATURAL SELECTION, AND CHRISTIAN PRODUCTION OF  
COUNTER-METAPHOR**

A Thesis

By

JULIET JOY NEUMANN

Submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies of  
Texas A&M University  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

May 2012

Major Subject: English

The Role of Metaphor in the Darwin Debates: Natural Theology, Natural Selection, and  
Christian Production of Counter-Metaphor

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## ABSTRACT

The Role of Metaphor in the Darwin Debates: Natural Theology, Natural Selection, and  
Christian Production of Counter-Metaphor. (May 2012)

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The presence of metaphorical language in Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* has been the source of much debate, particularly in the interaction between Darwin's theory and the Christian faith. The metaphorical language used to describe "nature," "evolution," "natural theology," and "natural selection" is examined—within Christianity prior to Darwin, in Darwin's writing of the *Origin*, and in the responses of three Victorian Christian critics of science.

"Natural selection" and "evolution" had metaphorical meanings prior to Darwin's use of these terms. "Nature" was a highly metaphysical concept, described by the metaphor of natural theology. "Evolution" was associated with epic understandings of human progress. The metaphor of natural theology was particularly important to the faith of Western Christians by the time of Darwin. In order to better understand the role of natural theology, the theories of metaphor developed by Kenneth Burke in "Four Master Tropes" and by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson in *Metaphors We Live By* are compared. This comparison results in the development of an expansion of Lakoff and

Johnson's metaphor theory, a model termed *experienced metaphor*. This model is used to explain Victorian Christians' emotional adherence to natural theology.

Many of the interpreters of Darwin's work, both secular and Christian, saw natural selection as a rival to natural theology. The works of three prominent Victorians who attempted to defend natural theology against the apparent onslaughts of science are evaluated for additional metaphorical language regarding nature and evolution. Philip Gosse, G. K. Chesterton, and Charles Spurgeon each produced counter-metaphors to defend natural theology—metaphors of awe/wonder and of sin/destruction. The rhetorical effects of these counter-metaphors promote the rejection of Darwin's theory of evolution.

The counter-metaphors identified are still in circulation within the debate over Darwin and Christianity today. The presence of metaphor in this debate deserves greater attention, in order to understand how metaphor affects the thinking of both Christian and secular audiences regarding Darwinian evolution.

## **DEDICATION**

To Dan, who never gives up

And to Bennett, Nathan, Mallory and Elliott, who always happily let Mama write

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ABSTRACT .....	iii
DEDICATION.....	v
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	vi
I. INTRODUCTION .....	1
II. CHRISTIAN VIEWS ON METAPHOR: NATURE, CREATION, AND NATURAL THEOLOGY .....	4
The History of Metaphor in Christianity.....	4
Natural Theology .....	11
Lakoff and Johnson on Metaphor .....	15
Burke on Metaphor .....	19
Lakoff and Johnson Contra Burke: Experienced Metaphor.....	20
Western Christian Experience of Natural Theology.....	24
III. DARWIN’S RIVAL VIEW OF NATURE: NATURAL SELECTION, EVOLUTION, AND MATERIALISM .....	27
Darwin’s Metaphor of Natural Selection .....	27
Metaphorical Views of Evolution.....	32
Nature as Materialism: A Secular Response to Darwin.....	36
Defending Natural Theology by Rejection of Evolution .....	38
IV. COUNTER-METAPHORS OF AWE AND OF DESTRUCTION IN CHRISTIAN RESPONSES TO NATURAL SELECTION.....	39
Integration versus Rejection of Natural Selection .....	39
Metaphors of Awe and Wonder: Philip Gosse and G. K. Chesterton .....	40
The Rhetoric of Gosse’s “Omphalos” .....	40
Wonder in Chesterton’s “Ethics of Elfland” .....	51
The Rhetoric of Fear: Spurgeon’s “Hideous Discovery” .....	54
The Fate of Darwin’s Theory .....	63
V. CONCLUSION.....	66
WORKS CITED .....	69
VITA .....	74

## I. INTRODUCTION

The metaphorical language of Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* has been a subject of much debate, among scientists, and between proponents of Darwinian evolution and defenders of Christian faith. While Darwin's idea of natural selection was novel from a scientific standpoint, the metaphorical language he used to describe his idea was based on long-held ideas of "nature" and "evolution" that already had metaphorical meanings. Nature was understood by the majority of Darwin's audience to be the realm that revealed God's purpose, goodness, and design, while evolution was associated with progression or unfolding, particularly of human culture. To many in Darwin's audience, the anthropomorphic images suggested by the metaphors of natural selection and evolution as developmental process were problematic because they seemed to grant selecting powers to nature. The interpretation of natural selection as an alternate chooser or selector of the apparent design in the world caused many to take natural selection to be a rival description of nature that threatened natural theology (cf. Young *Darwin's Metaphor*, Ruse *Evolution-Creation*).

Many Christians who saw natural selection as a rival to natural theology attempted to defend natural theology against the apparent onslaughts of evolution. This study looks at attempts to defend natural theology through the production of counter-metaphors, which oppose the ideas associated with natural selection and evolution. An evaluation of the works of three prominent Victorian Christians, Philip Gosse, G. K.

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Chesterton, and Charles Spurgeon, reveals two categories of counter-metaphors used to defend natural theology: metaphors of awe and wonder associated with nature, and metaphors of sin and destruction associated with evolution. The language of the counter-metaphors reveals the thinking of nineteenth century critics regarding natural selection and evolution, and these counter-metaphors continue to be prominent in debates over evolution and Christianity today. In particular, the metaphors of sin and destruction, produced by Spurgeon, pictured evolution as a “doorway to destruction” that must be sealed off in order to maintain safety. Spurgeon’s metaphor suggests a prohibition on the contemplation of evolution, and the metaphor thus encourages the idea of an irresolvable difference between Darwinian evolution and the Christian faith.

I begin my study with a brief history of Christian understandings of figurative language and metaphor. I then place particular emphasis on the presence of metaphor within Western Christianity concerning creation, nature, and natural theology during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, leading up to the time of Darwin. In order to further clarify the importance of natural theology within the Victorian Christian community, I next consider two rhetorical theories, by Kenneth Burke and by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson. Based on a comparison of these two theories I develop my own expansion of Lakoff/Johnson called *experienced metaphor*. This expanded model is used to evaluate the emotional responses of Darwin’s audience to the metaphorical language surrounding natural theology. In the following section, I consider Darwin’s inclusion of metaphors in the *Origin*—including natural selection, evolution, and survival of the fittest—as well as criticisms leveled at his use of metaphorical terms. Next, I look at the defense of natural

theology by Gosse, Chesterton, and Spurgeon. These Christian critics produced counter-metaphors of awe/wonder in relation to nature and of sin/destruction in relation to evolution. Through a close reading their texts, I consider how their metaphorical language encourages Christian rejection of any ideas—particularly Darwinian evolution—that seem to threaten natural theology. Finally, I consider how the counter-metaphors identified in this study, particularly *evolution is a doorway to destruction*, which is seen in the work of Spurgeon, are present in the ongoing debate within Christianity over Darwin and evolution.

## II. CHRISTIAN VIEWS ON METAPHOR: NATURE, CREATION, AND NATURAL THEOLOGY

In this section I consider the prominence of metaphor in the description of nature within Christianity prior to Darwin. First, I present a brief history of the role of metaphor and other figurative language within Christianity. This history provides important perspective to the Darwin debates, showing that at the time that Darwin presented his own metaphorical ideas there was something of a “metaphorical crisis” within the larger Christian community. Next, I look at one of the most prominent examples of metaphor within Western Christianity, the metaphorical view of nature described by natural theology. Though natural theology was formulated in Christianity as early as St. Augustine, it developed into a paradigm that was crucial to the faith of many Christians in the nineteenth century. Following this introduction to natural theology, I present two theoretical models on metaphor that I use to more fully understand the metaphor of natural theology. Through a comparison and contrast of the metaphor theories of Kenneth Burke in “Four Master Tropes” and of George Lakoff and Mark Johnson in *Metaphors We Live By*, I propose an expanded version of the theory of Lakoff/Johnson, called *experienced metaphor*, which helps to explain the emotional impact of the metaphorical language surrounding natural theology.

### ***The History of Metaphor in Christianity***

As a religion based on a written Scripture containing figurative language, Christian scholars have had to give account for metaphorical and other figurative language from the earliest time in Christian history. The Biblical books consist of a

wide variety of genres which employ metaphors and other tropes to varying degrees. Figurative language in Scripture has proved problematic for some within Christianity over the centuries. Christians have long debated issues over which passages should be taken figuratively, what authority figurative language holds, and how metaphorical or allegorical passages are to be interpreted and applied. While it is beyond the scope of this study to provide a detailed historical account of the views on metaphor within Christianity, a brief sketch provides important background information.

Discussion on figurative language began early in Christian history. In *On Christian Doctrine*, St. Augustine states that “the ambiguities of metaphorical words . . . demand no ordinary care and diligence” in the interpretation of Scripture (*Doctrine* 85). Despite his recognition that metaphorical interpretation is difficult, Augustine teaches that such figurative language is able to “lift the eye of the mind above what is corporeal and created, that it may drink in eternal light” (*Doctrine* 86). Augustine recognizes that figurative language, which he refers to as “signs,” can be misinterpreted and lead to error. However, he insists that the Christian “who does not understand what a sign signifies, but yet knows that it is a sign, is not in bondage” (*Doctrine* 89). The mere recognition that the language is figurative frees the reader from danger. For Augustine, signs, including metaphors, can bring great spiritual insight. Augustine’s endorsement of figurative interpretation of Scripture would eventually be formulated into four distinct levels of Scripture interpretation: literal, allegorical/typological, moral, and spiritual. Based on the prominent teaching of these four levels of interpretation within medieval

theology, interpretations of Scripture in the centuries after Augustine were often highly figurative or symbolic.

In *Summa Theologica*, Thomas Aquinas was not as positive about metaphors as Augustine had been. In his history of rhetoric, George Kennedy explains that Aquinas thought of metaphor merely as “a device of poetry, which he calls the least of all the sciences” (219). According to Kennedy, Aquinas concluded that Scripture employed metaphor only because “sacred doctrine required the truth to be veiled as an exercise for thoughtful minds and as a defense against the ridicule of unbelievers” (Kennedy 219). In Aquinas’ view, metaphor is a concession—not illuminating but actually obscuring meaning. God included metaphor within Scripture as a means to challenge our otherwise spiritually idle minds and for the protection of the gospel against its enemies. We can see a shift from the positive view of metaphor espoused by Augustine to the more negative approach of Aquinas.

The preface to John Bunyan’s *The Pilgrim’s Progress*, written in 1678, indicates that the Christian viewpoint on figurative language continued the uneasy relationship expressed by Aquinas. Bunyan wrote his introductory “The Author’s Apology for his Book” (v) at the beginning of *Pilgrim’s Progress* because of criticism he had received about the allegorical nature of his work. Bunyan relays that opponents had urged him to speak plainly, for “Metaphors make us blind” (viii). This criticism results in Bunyan’s defense of his allegory and of figurative language in general, which he argues was the very way in which God first introduced “His Gospel-Laws,” through Old Testament “Types, Shadows and Metaphors” (viii). Bunyan admits that figurative language can be

difficult to understand, calling his work “My dark and cloudy words,” but he insists that “they do but hold/ The Truth, as Cabinets inclose (sic) the Gold” (ix). Again, Bunyan reminds his readers that this is the pattern of Scripture itself, which is “In every where so full of all these things, / (Dark Figures, Allegories)” (ix). Bunyan’s defense of his own work, and his reminder that Scripture is filled with figurative language, suggests that many of his contemporaries in the seventeenth century were growing increasingly intolerant of figurative language in religious matters.

The Protestant Reformation instigated much of the decreasing tolerance for figurative language within Christianity. In his history of the Reformation, Alister McGrath notes that for Protestants there was an “absence of any authoritative interpreter of scripture that could give rulings on contested matters of biblical interpretation” (70). Early reformers assumed that this would not be a problem because they insisted that the Bible would be interpreted uniformly. The Swiss reformer Huldrych Zwingli “argued for the capacity of the Bible to interpret itself lucidly and unambivalently in all matters of importance” (McGrath 69). Experience proved that this was not the case. As soon as the central authority of the Pope and ruling Church councils was abolished, rival interpretations of Scripture spread rapidly. Denominations were formed largely on the basis of these differing Biblical interpretations. Many of these denominations did retain some level of authority structure, even if it was not explicitly noted. Authority came in the form of a strong founding personality, such as Martin Luther and John Calvin, who determined Biblical interpretation for their followers. These founding personalities settled how the Bible was to be interpreted within their denominational group—

especially in terms of figurative language, symbolism, and other contested matters of language. Subsequent Protestant groups did not always have such a strong authority figure on which to base their hermeneutic. For these later groups, rejection of figurative interpretations of the Bible became increasingly important. The simple, literal sense of the words of the Bible—what is commonly called Biblical literalism—became the only available authority to those who recognized no human authority. The rejection of human authority was particularly prominent for evangelical Protestants. Karen Armstrong, in *The Case for God*, notes that many evangelicals, especially in America, eventually developed a Biblical literalism that was “unparalleled” (xv) in the history of Biblical hermeneutics and were “taught to look for the plain sense of scripture” (248), so that for many the idea of figurative interpretation had become essentially obsolete.

The problem concerning figurative language in Christianity would only intensify for some Christians in the nineteenth century. The long-standing debate over figurative language in Scripture reached new height after the introduction of Higher Criticism by German scholars. Higher Critics extended the figurative reading of Scripture into the Gospel descriptions of the life and death of Jesus, which caused unprecedented anxiety for many. Many of these Christians, in reaction to the claims of Higher Criticism, insisted on ever-increasingly literal interpretations of the entire Bible, even those passages that had previously been universally accepted as figurative. The idea of figurative interpretations became associated, for some, with liberal, and even apostate, positions on Christianity.

Disagreement regarding metaphor in Christian language did not end in the nineteenth century. The representative positions of twentieth century commentators Dorothy L. Sayers and C. S. Lewis on the one hand and the theologian Gordon Clark on the other illustrate the ongoing Christian debate over metaphor.

Sayers, in *The Mind of the Maker*, insists that the Christian cannot comprehend God without the use of figurative language. As Sayers explains it, “The fact is, that all language about everything is analogical; we think in a series of metaphors” (23). The dependence on metaphor for thought and language is particularly true of language about God, of whom “we have no direct experience” (Sayers 23). Sayers is willing to admit that it “may be perilous, as it must be inadequate, to interpret God by analogy with ourselves,” but she concludes that “we are compelled to do so; we have no other means of interpreting anything” (23). Sayers not only accepts figurative language when it comes to spiritual matters, but insists on it. In a similar way, C. S. Lewis agrees that metaphors are necessary for religious language: “The truth is if we are going to talk at all about things which are not perceived by the senses, we are forced to use language metaphorically” (Lewis 88). Peter W. Macky explains that for Lewis, metaphorical language in Scripture is “the means by which we can ‘see God’s face and live’” (239). Lewis insists that figurative language within Christianity expresses Truth in a way that no other language can. Lewis and Sayers represent the view that metaphors within Scripture are purposefully figurative, and should be interpreted as such. Figurative language, and metaphor specifically, is indispensable when speaking about spiritual matters, which transcend our empirical experiences.



The approach to Scriptural metaphors by the theologian Gordon Clark, in *Language and Theology*, presents the other end of the spectrum. Though Clark was not contemporary with C. S. Lewis, Peter W. Macky contrasts the theories of Clark and Lewis as representatives of two dichotomous views on language and Christianity. Macky explains that for Clark, metaphor and analogy are “essentially ornamental or decorative, not types of speech that are essential to Christian speaking about God” (239). Instead, Clark insists that the scientific language of geometry is the standard for the expression of thought (Macky 240), so that “it is necessary to translate metaphors into clear literal propositions”—the language of geometrical proofs—“before they become useful for [spiritual] thought” (Macky 241). Clark argues that Biblical metaphors are inadequate for understanding until they are translated into something more concrete. Metaphors and other Biblical figurative language are actually only “containers of God’s Word (meaning) rather than that Word itself” (Macky 242). Hence, according to Clark, no language in the Bible should be taken figuratively. Those passages or images that appear to be figurative require translation into the True literal explanation before they can be useful.

As will be discussed in greater detail, the language and ideas surrounding Darwinian evolution were highly metaphorical. Natural selection, evolution, and even nature itself were all concepts invested with a great deal of metaphorical meaning. In order to rightly understand what Darwin was saying and how it applied to matters of faith, Christians would need to interact with metaphorical images and consider how they functioned in the spiritual realm. Some Christians were able to accomplish this with

relative ease. By the time of Darwin, another significant portion of Christians had lost the understanding of how to deal with figurative language in relation to their faith and were intolerant of such language in spiritual matters. The changing historical attitude within Christianity toward figurative language in spiritual matters left many Christians unprepared to adequately contend with the complex notions regarding nature that were present in the metaphor of natural selection.

Though a significant portion of Western Christians developed decreasing tolerance for figurative or metaphorical language in the interpretation of Scripture, paradoxically their understandings of nature were highly metaphorical. For the majority of Darwin's Christian audience, nature was understood through the metaphor of natural theology. I will next consider the importance of natural theology within Western thought.

### ***Natural Theology***

The concept of nature within Western Christianity had been associated with theological understandings of God for centuries prior to Darwin. This idea can be seen in the teachings of Jesus when he directs his listeners in the Sermon on the Mount to "consider the lilies of the field" in order to understand God's character of providential provision (Matt 6:28). Early in Christian history Augustine extended this idea, teaching believers to view nature as revealing God as much as Scripture did. From these early ideas of nature as a source of knowledge about God, or as ultimately more about the metaphysical than the physical realm, natural theology became the dominant means by which to understand nature. Following in the ideas set forth by Augustine, Francis

Bacon had advocated in *The Advancement of Learning* that nature was “the book of God’s works” (10), capable of standing beside “the book of God’s word,” or Scripture, for knowledge of God. Bacon was advocating greater attention to empirical observation and scientific inquiry, but he still does so within the system that suggests that it will teach one about the true nature of God. Bacon’s thought had profound influence on the English-speaking world, so that the idea of natural theology continued even as the scientific method became the accepted means of inquiry into nature.

Natural theologians discovered apparent order, design, and purpose in the world as greater attention was given to the study of nature. Thomas Jefferson and other Deists drew theological conclusions from nature’s order and design. Deists believed that because nature was made of observable, immovable laws, this showed that the Creator God was not involved in the world in an ongoing way. Jefferson’s views are revealed in the very language he used in the *Declaration of Independence*. In speaking of “the laws of Nature and of Nature’s God” in order to justify the actions of the American revolutionaries, Jefferson suggests that nature reveals the moral code by which men are compelled to live. Within this realm, “Nature” is a metaphor for fixed moral laws, which can be seen by everyone and need no special revelation.

Other natural theologians had a different interpretation of the design of nature. In 1809 William Paley brought his arguments on natural theology to a Victorian audience. In *Natural Theology, or Evidences of the Existence and Attributes of the Deity*, Paley argues that nature reveals a purpose, which necessitates a purposeful agent responsible for the observable details. Paley compares nature to the intricacies of a

watch, the mechanism of which shows not just order, but purposeful design with a certain teleological end. Paley insists that “[e]very manifestation of design, which existed in the watch, exists in the works of nature; with the difference, on the side of nature, of being greater and more, and that in a degree which exceeds all computation” (18). As opposed to the Deists, Paley’s view of nature revealed a God who worked purposefully within nature in order to produce certain pre-ordained ends. Nature is in the hands of and is guided by God. Through his comparison of nature with a watch, Paley gives nature a metaphorical meaning in which it is a valuable possession that can give assurance of God’s presence and beneficent work in the world. Paley’s work “was required reading for Cambridge undergraduates and was accepted as normative by leading British and American scientists for over fifty years” (Armstrong 228), thus his view of natural theology was prominent during the nineteenth century.

In *The Case for God*, Karen Armstrong traces the development of natural theology within the Western world, considering how and why Christianity in the West developed a view of nature as a Book of God’s works. Natural theology was not just an issue for scholastic theologians, but came to undergird the everyday faith of all types of Christians. According to Armstrong, Western philosophers increasingly sought certainty in matters relating to God and religion. Armstrong posits that this desire for certainty resulted from an attempt to combat the religious upheaval that had ravaged Europe during the Thirty Years War (207). She argues that the mathematical proofs of Descartes and orderly natural laws of Newton provided the type of certainty society was seeking. Armstrong explains that scientific discoveries were taken by many to

empirically prove God's attributes, which could be observed by all and agreed upon. The resultant unity regarding God's presence and character ended any need for sectarian violence.

While Enlightenment rationalism was eventually interpreted by many to be a challenge to religion, the idea that natural laws proved God's existence and showed his goodness remained prominent among defenders of faith. "Scientific religion" (Armstrong 213), if not taken to the extreme of atheism as had been done by the philosophes, seemed to give confidence and authority to the teachings of Christianity. The "instant success and recognition in the English-speaking world" (Armstrong 227) of Paley's work shows that natural theology fit well into the religious mindset of the Victorian culture, which wanted God to be as accessible and understandable as technology was becoming. Armstrong notes that even Evangelicals, with their otherwise anti-intellectual bent, embraced the natural theology that came from the Enlightenment. For Evangelicals, "the natural laws that scientists had discovered in the universe were tangible demonstrations of God's providential care and provided the faith of Jesus Christ with unshakeable, scientific certainty" (Armstrong 237). Based on Armstrong's description, by the nineteenth century natural theology was not merely popular but had become a necessary support to the faith of many. Christians had become so accustomed to certainty in the area of faith that they were dependent on the idea that science proved their religion. Natural theology was not merely a poetic description but had developed into a crucial paradigm for many Christians by the Victorian Era.

The prominence of the metaphor of natural theology had significant impact on the way in which Darwin's theory of natural selection was received. In order to explain this impact, I consider the metaphor theories of George Lakoff and Mark Johnson and of Kenneth Burke, which I use to elaborate on the way in which natural theology functioned in Victorian culture.

### ***Lakoff and Johnson on Metaphor***

Lakoff and Johnson collaborated in *Metaphors We Live By* to formulate a new concept of metaphor, in which rather than seeing metaphor as a device to add flourish or persuasion, metaphor is "perhaps the key to giving an adequate account of understanding" (ix). For Lakoff and Johnson, our most fundamental thought processes are built on metaphorical thinking. Using linguistic evidence, they present extensive examples of ways in which ordinary language is built on "a metaphor we are hardly ever conscious of" (3). As a primary example they explore the fact that Western culture speaks about argument as if it were a battle, resulting in the conceptual metaphor *argument is war*. While we rarely overtly acknowledge this metaphor, our language about arguments reveals that we think, and thus speak and act, towards argument as if it were a battle (4). The metaphor "is in our very concept of an argument. The language of argument is not poetic, fanciful, or rhetorical; it is literal. We talk about arguments that way because we think of them that way" (5). This kind of metaphorical thinking is necessary because "so many of the concepts that are important to us are either abstract or not clearly delineated in our experience (the emotions, ideas, time, etc.)" (115). We can

only understand the unknown by comparing it to something already known, to see how it is like or unlike things we are familiar with.

Lakoff and Johnson argue that our foundational knowledge comes from the experience of living in a physical body, so that it is from this experience that we produce metaphors. We perceive our bodies as “entities bounded by a surface” (25) with spatial orientation such as “up-down, front-back, in-out, near-far, etc.” (56). The physical experience of having a body is the most prominent experience we have because “our continual everyday bodily functioning” constantly interacts with spatial orientation (56). Our most basic metaphorical concepts are thus compared to simple orientational experience. A clear example comes in the metaphor *happy is up*, which belongs to the category Lakoff and Johnson call orientational metaphors. The idea “happy” is abstract, but we have a physical experience to correlate with the emotions called “happy.” A happy mood results in physical energy which enables an erect posture, whereas depression leads to physical lethargy that impels one to sit or lie down. Happy is thus compared to up, which emerges in such language as “that *boosted* my spirits” or “you’re in *high* spirits” (15, emphasis original).

Ontological metaphors are another category of metaphor that emerges from direct physical experience as well. These metaphors result from our physical experience of being “discreet or bounded,” from which we conceive of things that are not discreet or bounded as if they are (25). This gives us the ability to view “events, activities, emotions, ideas, etc., as entities and substances” (25). Lakoff and Johnson give the example of the experience of rising prices, which is condensed into the metaphor

*inflation is an entity*. The metaphorical understanding of rising prices offers a way of referring to the experience (26). Orientational and ontological metaphors are grounded in direct physical experience and are the concepts “that we live by in the most fundamental way” (57). In fact, we are not consciously aware that our thoughts on these foundational concepts are even metaphorical.

Starting from the foundational orientational and ontological metaphors, Lakoff and Johnson describe increasingly complex metaphors that are developed through a process of metaphorical layering. Orientational and ontological metaphors are so basic to our thought processes that Lakoff and Johnson admit they “are not in themselves very rich” (61) in terms of description. They can be elaborated upon, however, to produce “structural metaphors” (61). This process is seen in the elaboration of the ontological metaphor *mind is an entity* to the structural metaphor *mind is a machine*. *Mind is an entity* emerges from the physical experience of “being bounded and set off from the rest of the world by the surface of our skins” so that “we experience the rest of the world as outside us” (29). We project this “container” experience onto the concept “mind,” so that the mind is seen as a bounded entity. *Mind is a machine* elaborates upon this container experience to give it a more specific description. The more complex metaphor of the machine is not tied as directly to physical experience, but it is dependent on the previous existence of *mind is an entity*, which is derived from direct physical experience. Structural metaphors are a more complex layer of metaphor, not as directly tied to the body, but they are still tied to experience. *Mind is a machine* makes no sense unless one has experience of what a machine is and how it functions. Ultimately, structural



metaphors are also grounded in simple bodily experience, as seen in the dependence of *mind is a machine* on the ontological metaphor *mind is an entity*. Continuing the process of layering, structural metaphors can then be connected to one another in systems of complex coherence (97) that add additional layers of complexity.

Lakoff and Johnson provide an example of the “new [or poetic] metaphor” *love is a collaborative work of art* (139) to underscore that all metaphors—not just those that are conceptual—are ultimately grounded in physical experience. This metaphor is based on the basic ontological metaphors *love is an entity* and *work is an entity*. Both of these ontological metaphors are grounded in the basic physical container experience. We speak about *love*, for example, as if it were actually a discreet entity that we can define, discuss, describe, and experience. However, the concept *love* is actually made up of a whole host of abstract experiences and ideas that are brought together into the appearance of a discreet entity. The idea, as argued by Lakoff and Johnson, that ethereal ideas can be made into such an entity comes from our bodily experience of being a contained unit, bound by skin that provides a boundary of me/not me. Because we define the world through this universal bodily experience, we are able to propose a similarly bounded idea called *love*. *Love is a collaborative work of art*, then, cannot be understood without this grounding of the bounded physical experience.

In this study I undertake a theoretical expansion of Lakoff and Johnson’s work, which I call *experienced metaphor*, and apply it specifically to the metaphor of natural theology. In order to develop my theoretical expansion, I will compare the metaphor theory of Lakoff/Johnson with that of Kenneth Burke.

### ***Burke on Metaphor***

In “Four Master Tropes,” Kenneth Burke is not concerned with how metaphors are produced and revealed in everyday language, as are Lakoff and Johnson, but on what they can and cannot do in the role of description. Given a particular metaphor, what can it tell us about the concept to which it refers? Burke explains that a metaphor offers merely one of many possible perspectives on a topic. It is “a device for seeing something *in terms of* something else. It brings out the thisness of a that, or the thatness of a this” (503, emphasis original). Each of these single perspectives is necessarily limited, for two reasons. First, a metaphor is a perspective of “incongruity,” for “the seeing of something in terms of something else involves a ‘carrying-over’ of a term from one realm into another, a process that necessarily involves varying degrees of incongruity in that the two realms are never identical” (504). A given metaphor may tell us something about a topic, but that “something” reveals what the topic is *not* as much as what it *is*. When two concepts are compared, we are able to see that they are alike, but at the same time we realize that they are not the same and appreciate their differences, as well. Secondly, each perspective is limited because it is only one of many possible perspectives “from which [the topic] can with justice be perceived” (504). No one metaphor stands as the only thing to which a concept, idea, person, or object can be compared. If there can be many comparisons, there can be many perspectives. Each perspective is considered not only valuable but also necessary to an understanding of the topic to which it refers.

It could be said, based on Burke's theory, that a properly functioning metaphor is to be taken provisionally. For Burke, a metaphor does not give a complete description or declare Truth, but merely offers one of many possible perspectives so that "it is [only] by the approach through a variety of perspectives that we establish a character's reality" (504). Burke describes a process in which different perspectives be "encouraged to participate in an orderly parliamentary development" in order to achieve "a 'resultant certainty'" about the topic to which a metaphor refers (513). No single "'sub-perspective' can be treated as either precisely right or precisely wrong" since they are each only one "voice" (512). According to Burke, a metaphor is good as far as it goes, but must never be taken as anything more than a sub-perspective that should be included with a host of other perspectives.

The metaphor theories of Burke and of Lakoff and Johnson are congruent in some respects. Most prominently, both agree that a given metaphor cannot be taken as the single description of a subject. For Burke, each metaphor is only one of many possible perspectives and therefore incomplete alone. For Lakoff and Johnson, a metaphor is too culturally bound to encompass a complete idea of Truth about a subject. A closer look at the theories of Burke and of Lakoff and Johnson, however, reveals that Lakoff and Johnson's metaphor theory puts strain on Burke's idea of perspective.

### ***Lakoff and Johnson Contra Burke: Experienced Metaphor***

It is my contention that Burke's theory of metaphor requires a high level of evaluative distance from a given metaphor. His insistence on the preliminary nature of a single metaphor and the democratic process of including all of the available descriptions

of a topic requires the observer to approach a metaphor as a dispassionate critic. While this process may be preferable, I take Lakoff and Johnson's theory to suggest that Burke's parliamentary process is an ideal that can prove difficult for many to achieve. In order to more fully develop my idea on the limited usefulness of Burke's theory on metaphor, I elaborate on the theoretical implications of Lakoff and Johnson.

In *Metaphors We Live By*, Lakoff and Johnson are primarily concerned with showing that our most basic conceptual systems are metaphorical and are produced from bodily experience. These metaphors are then revealed in everyday language. In my application of Lakoff and Johnson, I focus on how metaphors are interpreted, rather than produced. Based on Lakoff and Johnson's theory, metaphors are necessarily interpreted through an ingrained system of bodily reference—necessarily, because the body is ultimately the grounding of every metaphor. This system of interpretation means that in order to understand a given metaphor, each member of the audience will filter the language of the metaphor through his or her own physical experiences. If we consider Lakoff and Johnson's example of the new metaphor *love is a collaborative work of art* we can see this process of interpretation. Interpreters of the metaphor *love is a collaborative work of art*, in an attempt to understand it, must consider what a collaborative work of art consists of in their physical experience. They will think through their own physical experiences of art—perhaps physical trips to museums or the personal production of some artistic work, particularly if it were collaborative.

Remembered experiences are not neutral; they are tied to any emotions connected to the memory. We can imagine, for example, a person who was taunted for

lack of artistic ability during participation in some collaborative work of art as a child. For this person, the metaphor *love is a collaborative work of art* evokes remembered emotions of pain or embarrassment. Another person might fondly remember a shared art project with a parent, and thus the metaphor will access emotions of warmth and security. Interpretation of the metaphor *love is a collaborative work of art* ultimately produces an emotional response based on experience. As will be developed later in this study, a similar process occurs with the metaphor of natural theology, in which the metaphorical images associated with natural theology evoke experiences of possessing valuable objects. As will be seen, the experience of possessing something valuable is tied to emotions of security and comfort.

Interpretation of the language of any metaphor follows this same process. Metaphors access memories of physical experiences, which can evoke associated emotions. I call this process *experienced metaphor*. The model of experienced metaphor stresses the necessary inclusion of the emotional realm in interpretation of metaphor and challenges Burke's idea of the dispassionately intellectual contemplation of metaphor.

Lakoff and Johnson explicitly describe some of the aspects that I have used to posit my model of experienced metaphor. They admit that "the meaning a metaphor will have . . . will be partly culturally determined and partly tied to my past experiences" (142). This corresponds to the idea that interpretations of metaphor come from remembered experiences. Furthermore, Lakoff and Johnson also consider examples of metaphor may be "grossly inappropriate" (143) to the personal experiences of a

particular person. They admit that in this case “the same metaphor that gives new meaning to our experiences will not give meaning to his” (143). Lakoff and Johnson’s description of an inappropriate metaphor approaches the understanding of metaphor at the same intellectual/evaluative level that Burke describes. Lakoff and Johnson develop their ideas to suggest that an inappropriate metaphor may fail “to give new meaning” in certain situations, but they do not consider the potential production of antagonistic emotion and the effects this will have. Their own theory suggests, however, that such emotional responses are inevitable when accessing remembered experience. In my view, the idea of an inappropriate metaphor deserves further development to consider its emotional consequences, which I have undertaken in the model of experienced metaphor.

Rhetorical scholars, beginning with Aristotle, have long recognized that metaphor stirs emotion. The model of experienced metaphor acknowledges the emotional aspect of metaphors, but it moves beyond this as well. This model’s primary contribution is to provide a critical analytical tool to evaluate *how* a particular metaphor would be received at an emotional level by a given audience. While it is impossible to know with certainty what exact emotions are evoked by a particular metaphor within an individual member of an audience, experienced metaphor does offer the ability to make valid propositions about emotional effect within a broad audience. The rhetorical critic can follow a series of evaluations of the images associated with a metaphor. First, do the metaphorical images refer to objects or experiences that are widely familiar within a given culture? If so, would these images be more likely to evoke positive or negative

remembered experiences? Then, what positive or negative emotions, respectively, are most typically associated with the experiences most prominent within that culture? By following this process, based on the idea of experienced metaphor, the rhetorical critic is able to postulate the most prominent emotional response that a given metaphor will produce.

This study focuses on the metaphors of natural theology and natural selection, which were important to the understanding and reception of Charles Darwin's theory on species change, and also on counter-metaphors produced by Christian critics of Darwin. I apply experienced metaphor to natural theology in order to delineate the emotions that accompanied Victorian belief in natural theology. It is my goal to highlight the fact that for those who could not integrate natural selection with natural theology, natural selection would be seen as an emotional as well as intellectual threat to their faith.

### ***Western Christian Experience of Natural Theology***

An understanding of the emotional elements of belief in natural theology helps to further explain what was at stake if natural theology were threatened by natural selection, as many people took to be the case. In order to understand the emotional response to natural theology for the Victorian Christian audience, I more closely examine the language used to describe natural theology.

As noted previously, in *The Advancement of Learning* Francis Bacon had called nature a book that displayed God's works. Though Bacon wrote centuries prior to the Victorian period, his work was fundamental to the thought processes of the English-speaking world, and his image of nature as a book would have been well known. The

use of this idea by Bacon continued a discussion that had begun with Augustine and was central to medieval Christian theology. The analysis of the work of Philip Gosse, which appears later in this study, shows that Gosse also used this image of nature as a book, calling the earth a “stone book” (371) that reveals the mind of God. Similarly, Charles Lyell used the metaphor of the earth as a book in his *Principles of Geology*. After showing that ancient Greek philosophers neglected to investigate matters of geology, he concludes that “the ancient history of the globe was to them a sealed book, and although written in characters of the most striking and imposing kind, they were unconscious even of its existence” (27). The repetitions by Gosse and Lyell of the idea that *nature is a book* demonstrate that a long line of thinkers since Augustine had used this image in the description of nature. By the nineteenth century, the image already had a long history within the English-speaking world.

Paley, who reaffirmed the concept of natural theology to his Victorian audience, created an additional metaphor for nature. Like Newton, Paley insisted that nature was as mechanistic and purposeful as a watch. In his *Natural Theology*, Paley portrays the discovery and examination of a watch, which vividly sets the image before his audience. Paley uses the watch to provide an understanding of nature, for examination of either one will result in similar teleological conclusions. Given the prominence of Paley’s *Natural Theology* in the Victorian culture, the image of a watch associated with nature would also have been widely familiar.

The images of a book and a watch are similar in an important way: they present nature as a possession. Books can be owned and collected. If rare, they can be quite



valuable. Books also serve as a source of knowledge, which is associated with power, prestige, and social status. Watches, likewise, are items of value, often associated with high craftsmanship and passed down through the generations as heirlooms. The model of experienced metaphor suggests that Victorian interpreters of these metaphors would access experiences of possessing valuable items, such as a book and a watch. These remembered experiences inevitably evoke emotions consistent with security, status, and prosperity. The metaphorical language attached to nature in the English-speaking world meant that natural theology provided Victorian Christians with a positive emotional experience.

As will be seen in the next section, Darwin's introduction of natural selection was viewed by many as a threat to natural theology. Natural selection, with its metaphorical image interpreted by many to suggest a rival chooser or controller of nature, absent any need for God, would be deemed by many Christians to be a threat to the security and comfort inherent in the experience of natural theology. This would have profound effects on the way in which many Christians received Darwin's theory and on their rhetorical responses. Next, I consider the way in which Darwin's own use of metaphor interacted with the metaphor of natural theology.

### III. DARWIN'S RIVAL VIEW OF NATURE: NATURAL SELECTION, EVOLUTION, AND MATERIALISM

#### *Darwin's Metaphor of Natural Selection*

Darwin famously described his ideas on species change using the metaphor of natural selection, which was based on a domestic breeder of animals. In the Preface to the *Origin* Darwin notes that “a careful study of domesticated animals and of cultivated plants” (23) served as the original impetus for his consideration of species variation. His first chapter goes into significant detail on the observable variation that occurs from the work of breeders and horticulturists. This is not a work of animal husbandry, however, and Darwin gives such detail to this subject only because the work of the domestic breeder is an important conceptual foundation for Darwin's explanation of species change. By analogical comparison, Darwin realized that his concept of species change was like the work of the animal breeder. Because the image of the breeder prompted Darwin's own thoughts on the subject, he then carries it forward for his explanation. As he moves into his own theory in the *Origin*, Darwin asks, “Can the principle of selection, which we have seen is so potent in the hands of man, apply under nature? I think we shall see that it can act most efficiently” (93). What we can observe a breeder to do in selecting traits, Darwin proposes also occurs in nature because of struggle for survival. “The preservation of favourable individual differences and variations, and the destruction of those which are injurious, I have called Natural Selection. . .” (94). In his concept of natural selection, Darwin develops his analogical thinking into a metaphor in which nature is a selecting entity. His concept is *like* an animal breeder who selects

certain traits, so he explains his idea as a process in which a purely naturalistic mechanism is also described as a selecting entity.

In explaining his concept of species change, Darwin faced two challenges. First, Darwin did not actually know the biological mechanism at the level of the organism by which his theorized process might take place. How did traits appear in any given organism, how could new ones arise, and in what manner were they passed to offspring? Darwin developed his theory significantly before the molecular biology of genetics was formulated, which would later answer many of these questions. As John Angus Campbell notes, “No more than Plato did Darwin have positive knowledge about the actual origin of the species. What he did have was a sense of what seemed to him (after years of study) likely” (“Why” 225). Darwin’s lack of concrete knowledge meant that he had to describe an idea that was far from complete. The second challenge Darwin faced in explaining his theory was the novel nature of his ideas. Discussion in the scientific community about gradual change of species was prominent well before Darwin began to formulate the theories eventually published in *On the Origin of Species*, but Darwin’s contribution to the discussion came in a novel concept of how competition among living organisms could account for species change. Though novelty was one of the aspects that made Darwin’s theory so important, it also meant that he was communicating an idea that had no previous point of reference for his general Victorian audience. Darwin needed to present his ideas in a way that was easily understandable even when many of his non-scientific readers had never heard of his concepts before.

Without a familiar concept with which readers could compare Darwin's theory, however, it was a difficult idea to explain.

Campbell suggests that Darwin used metaphor to meet these two challenges. Metaphor enabled Darwin to "[contend] with common sense for a cultural space in which his new idea could intelligibly appear" ("Why" 206). No one could see the process that Darwin attempted to describe, thus Darwin could offer no proof in terms of the empirical demands of science; but something very like the process could be observed among breeders, and the metaphorical expansion of this process would give his theory both credence and clarity. Darwin understood that within science, "a truly striking analogy could gain common acceptance as a true explanation even if the underlying phenomena could not themselves be directly observed" (Campbell "Revolution" 358). Metaphor was the means by which Darwin displayed a process that could not be seen.

Darwin's use of the metaphor of natural selection met the two major challenges he faced in communicating his ideas, but it also caused problems for many interpreters of Darwin's work. Strictly speaking, Darwin's theory proposes that certain traits continue to exist, while others cease to exist when the reproductively inferior animals with those traits die off. Nothing is selected, for it is a naturalistic process in which there is no entity that actually selects or chooses traits. The metaphor natural selection proved problematic to many who focused on a too-literal understanding of it. The idea of selection, many argued, implied a chooser and thus negated the naturalistic quality of Darwin's process. A. R. Wallace, the co-author of Darwin's original publication, opposed the use of the term because of this type of popular misconception. He urged

Darwin to drop natural selection in favor of something that did not imply “the constant watching of an intelligent ‘chooser’”:

To the few, [natural selection] is as clear as daylight, and beautifully suggestive, but to many it is evidently a stumbling block. I wish therefore to suggest to you the possibility of entirely avoiding this source of misconception in your great work . . . by adopting Spencer’s term . . . “Survival of the fittest”.

[Survival of the fittest] is the plain expression of the *facts*—*Nat. selection* is a metaphorical expression of it—and to a certain degree *indirect* and *incorrect*, since, even personifying Nature, she does not so much select special variations, as exterminate the most unfavourable [sic] ones. (Wallace, n.p., emphasis original)

In reply to Wallace, Darwin explained that he used the term natural selection because of the “great advantage” to understanding that came from “connect[ing] natural and artificial selection” (Darwin, Letter 5145 n.p.). To Darwin, the potential help of the term outweighed any misunderstanding of it, and he quipped to Wallace that the term natural selection “must depend ‘on the survival of the fittest’. As in time the term must grow intelligible, the objections to its use will grow weaker and weaker” (Darwin, Letter 5145 n.p.). Darwin argued that the term would either prove useful to understanding and survive or continue to confuse and be discarded; it was not an all-encompassing description for Darwin, but he did argue for its helpfulness. Other terms, such as survival of the fittest, could be substituted, which would constitute different perspectives

in the Burkean sense. This was acceptable to Darwin in some ways, but he also insisted to Wallace that the perspective of natural selection was both valid and useful.

Darwin also addressed objections to metaphorical aspects of natural selection in later editions of the *Origin*. He acknowledged the problem outright, noting that “[s]everal writers have misapprehended or objected to the term natural selection” because of various problems with the idea of something actively selecting traits. “In the literal sense of the word, no doubt, natural selection is a false term . . . [but] every one knows what is meant and implied by such metaphorical expressions; and they are almost necessary for brevity” (*Origin* 94). Darwin’s clarification of natural selection shows again that he was aware that the term was not really “true” in the sense of fact, but he insists that this metaphorical way of looking at the problem is helpful. Natural selection approximates the process by giving a visual picture to something that cannot be viewed and condenses many complicated details into a manageable idea. Darwin hopes that the helpful nature of the metaphor will prevail and that “[w]ith a little familiarity . . . superficial objections will be forgotten” (*Origin* 94). By the sixth edition of his work, Darwin continued to argue that he could drop the term and still retain his theory—they are not synonymous—but that he had not found a better image with which to replace it.

If we refer back to the metaphor theory of Burke, Darwin’s metaphor was meant to function in a way that Burke would later describe as perspective. The metaphor would be expected to be helpful about some aspects of Darwin’s teaching but not about others. If taken as a perspective, natural selection would work as metaphor should according to Burke, “for experimental and heuristic purposes” (Burke 504). The

metaphor could be used or discarded in the future depending on how helpful it proved to general understanding and to promoting further inquiry. According to Michael Ruse, the heuristic value of Darwin's metaphor was in fact the most important aspect of it ("Metaphor" 606). The idea of the metaphor of natural selection as a perspective promoting understanding and ongoing inquiry was Darwin's own view of how his metaphor should be taken.

Eventually, Darwin did incorporate Herbert Spencer's phrase "Survival of the Fittest" as an alternate description of natural selection, as Wallace had urged him to. In this way, we can see that Darwin participated in what Burke would much later describe as the parliamentary process of metaphorical description. The acceptance of another metaphor reinforces the idea that Darwin knew the metaphor of natural selection was incomplete on its own and did not encompass any idea of Truth, and it also shows Darwin's commitment to a metaphorical description of his mechanism of species change.

### ***Metaphorical Views of Evolution***

In addition to the metaphor of natural selection, which Darwin coined, he also made use of the term evolution, which was not a new idea and was already deeply invested with metaphorical meaning. When Darwin used the term *evolution* in relation to his theory, it was already associated with "an unrolling or unfolding" in which "a final result . . . is immanent in the original state" (Lewontin n.p.). The term denoted progress and was often used to describe human civilization before it was applied to biology. Many biological evolutionists prior to Darwin, including his own grandfather Erasmus

Darwin, arrived at their speculations about biological species change because they were committed social progressionists and linked the two ideas together. “[Erasmus] Darwin drew an explicit analogy between the progress of culture and the progress of biology, the one feeding into the other and then back again” (Ruse *Evolution* 33), so that “notions of evolutionary and cultural progress were inextricably tied together” (Ruse *Evolution* 32).

Darwin’s most notable use of the term *evolution* comes at the end of the *Origin*, in which he concludes his theory by insisting that:

There is grandeur in this view of life, with its several powers, having been originally breathed by the Creator into a few forms or into one; and that, whilst this planet has gone cycling on according to the fixed law of gravity, from so simple a beginning endless forms most beautiful and most wonderful have been, and are being, evolved (490).

Historians debate what Darwin’s use of *evolved* indicates about his own view of progress within his mechanism of species change, but there is little doubt that in using the term he was at the very least aware of its previous metaphorical connotations. He speaks of a “simple” beginning that becomes “most beautiful and most wonderful”—concepts clearly drawing upon the metaphorical association of evolution with progress. While Darwin significantly edited his use of the metaphor of natural selection within later editions of the *Origin*, it is notable that he never removed or changed his concluding use of *evolved*, despite its association with progress. Ruse notes that “Charles Darwin was one of the most ardent social progressionists of the nineteenth century” (*Evolution* 76), which indicates that he would have been very familiar with the



association between *evolution* and progressionism. What is most pertinent to this study is not Darwin's particular stance on social progression but his knowing use of a term that already had significant metaphorical meaning.

Darwin's association with metaphorical understandings of evolution as upward progress can further be seen in the language of the *Origin*. According to William Scheick, the *Origin* contains many elements of an epic, including an element of mystery and, more prominently, the heroic figure that battles toward some better future. "Such [heroic] characters are present in the *Origin*," argues Scheick, "in the individual ancestral plants and animals which struggled for survival and which, through their efforts, give meaning to even our own human existence" (275). Darwin stated that these early species that had survived to propagate themselves were "ennobled," and every one of these heroic "form[s] of life contributes to 'the same gradual process of improvement'" (Scheick 278) associated with evolution. This epic depiction of improvement was, in Scheick's description, a "victory of the spirit" in "the upward struggle of life toward perfection" (278). While Scheick points out that Darwin's use of epic conventions was almost certainly not intentional (272), the presence of epic language and imagery further confirms the idea that Darwin's work in the *Origin* employed the metaphorical ideas of evolution as an upward progression.

Darwin's language expresses the unknown in terms of already understood entities. This is not necessarily unusual within science. Theodore L. Brown argues in *Making Truth: Metaphor in Science* that "metaphorical reasoning is at the very core of what scientists do when they create experiments" and form models to explain them (14).

Typically, however, scientific models/metaphors are built around simple, observable physical phenomena that are applied to the unobservable processes in which a scientist is interested. Darwin's particular metaphors, on the other hand, were used in an attempt to provide an understanding of a more comprehensive and conceptual idea—nature—than is typical for the work of scientists. John Angus Campbell argues that Darwin's knowing use of metaphors that were associated with natural theology meant that "the *Origin* situated itself as but the latest in an apostolic succession of works in English natural theology" ("Revolution" 358). According to Campbell, Darwin purposely placed his work in this position not because he espoused natural theology but because it was required by the "grammar" of his culture. Darwin had a "tendency directly to exploit the resources of the tradition for persuasive advantage" (Campbell "Revolution" 358).

Whether Darwin's alignment of his work with natural theology was intentional or not, it was counter-productive to his greater empirical goals. Darwin's interest was not in metaphysical or theological debates. "Although Darwin could hardly get away from the religion issue," Ruse explains, "it was not really the main focus of his concerns. He was a fulltime scientist, and what he wanted to do was produce a theory of evolution that would measure up to the exacting standards of the best science in his day" (*Evolution* 81). Darwin's goal was to elevate evolutionary biology to an equal standing with the respected fields of chemistry and physics (Ruse *Evolution* 81), but it would prove difficult for him to keep the discussion in the empirical realm due to his uses of metaphor.

By describing his theory on species change through prominent use of the metaphor of natural selection and aligning his ideas with the idea of evolution as

progression, Darwin placed his scientific ideas into a highly metaphorical realm. We have seen that prior to the introduction of his work, the metaphors that he accessed had also been highly metaphysical—especially in the case of nature. Darwin’s language would thus align his ideas on species change, for many, with metaphysical interpretations. These metaphysical interpretations, prompted by metaphorical language, occurred both in his secular and Christian audiences. We will briefly consider the responses of some within Darwin’s secular audience before moving to a deeper consideration of Christian responses to Darwin.

***Nature as Materialism: A Secular Response to Darwin***

For some, Darwin’s description of natural selection relieved mankind of the need for God. Those who would become ardent supporters of evolution, such as Thomas Huxley and Herbert Spencer, developed anti-theological views of nature. These men developed materialistic worldviews based on evolution, bolstered by the fact that Darwin had finally given transmutation of the species scientific credibility. It should be noted, however, that the views of nature developed by Huxley and Spencer were still highly metaphorical. For Huxley, who “needed a rival ideology, a secular religion, that he could use to fight traditional Anglican Christianity” (Ruse *Evolution* 106), evolution allowed nature to become the great “disprover” of God. There was no design or purpose in the world, just slow, natural change accumulated over time without a need for outside interference or even speculations about a first cause. Ruse argues that Darwin “grumbled” (*Evolution* 94) that Huxley was distorting his theory by using it as an insistence for rationalism over religion, but Darwin’s own metaphorical description of

nature seemed to support Huxley's conclusions. In Huxley's hands, nature became an anti-theological apologist. While Huxley's conclusions are not inevitable, Darwin's metaphorical language did make them possible.

Similarly, Herbert Spencer created his own metaphor of nature in his championing of evolution. Spencer interpreted natural selection to reveal nature as an "unending struggle and competition" (Ruse *Evolution* 108) that should be allowed free reign for the betterment of mankind. Viewing nature as a war or competition had significant influence for Spencer on the way that societies should be governed, so that nature had even further metaphorical meaning as a force leading to social and ethical progress. Darwin's own use of the evolutionary/progressive line of thinking and language has significance for Spencer's particular interpretation. Darwin's use of an already metaphorical idea—evolution—allowed Spencer's further metaphorical development that "natural" death and struggle would lead to progress in the social realm just as it did in the biological world.

Campbell notes that there is no scholarly consensus on Darwin's own view of nature: "Exactly how far Darwin wished to press the naturalist theme, with which the *Origin* is laced, is a legitimate and lively subject of disagreement" ("Intelligent Design" 13). It is indisputable, however, that others such as Spencer and Huxley seized on the naturalistic theme and metaphorical descriptions offered by the *Origin* and expanded it to fit their own metaphysical views of the world.

### *Defending Natural Theology by Rejection of Evolution*

We have seen that for materialists such as Huxley and Spencer, the metaphors representing natural selection were in direct competition with those depicting natural theology. Based on their interpretations of the metaphors of natural selection and natural theology, these materialists concluded that only of these two ways of viewing nature was valid. According to this view, if the scientific details described by natural selection were true, then natural theology was not a legitimate way in which to view nature. Ironically, many religionists—particularly evangelicals—had a similar response. If natural selection were true, it would seem to many Christians that a rival chooser was in charge of the world—one whose mode of action was through destruction, which did not seem consistent with the idea of a loving God. Based on the descriptions by Bacon and Paley, nature had been seen as a valuable possession. If nature could no longer be seen as a valuable possession but was rather a death-filled war, what did this say about God? And what about those whose faith had become so dependent on this seemingly threatened natural theology? As David Livingstone notes, this latter question would prove of utmost importance in many Christian objections to Darwin, for “those who seemed to have the greatest difficulty [with the theory of natural selection] were those whose religion depended on some version of natural theology” (124).

Next, I will consider the rhetorical strategies of those Christians who attempted to defend natural theology. I give particular attention to the production of counter-metaphors in the works of three prominent Victorian-era Christians, Philip Gosse, G. K. Chesterton, and Charles Spurgeon.

#### IV. COUNTER-METAPHORS OF AWE AND OF DESTRUCTION IN CHRISTIAN RESPONSES TO NATURAL SELECTION

##### *Integration versus Rejection of Natural Selection*

It is important to note that many within Western Christianity *were* able to accommodate Darwin's new perspective on nature with relative ease. The Princeton president James McCosh was a good example of this, providing "the first public endorsement of evolution by an American religious leader" (Gundlach 85). McCosh was not, despite his acceptance of Darwin's description of transmutation of the species, abandoning a traditional understanding of the Christian faith. He was elected to the Presidency at Princeton precisely for his commitment to "the unity of piety and learning and the supremacy of religion over natural knowledge" (Gundlach 86). Even as "the first prominent American Protestant religious leader to espouse evolutionism" (Gundlach 86), McCosh still retained his Protestant evangelical beliefs. He argued that the key was to accept "evolution properly limited and explained" (Gundlach 86). McCosh believed that Darwin's new perspective on nature simply augmented, not eliminated, earlier understandings of "method and mechanism in the divine production of the variety of life" (Gundlach 90). For McCosh, Darwinian evolution might remove "some of the mystery of the cosmos, perhaps," but it also "revealed to humankind the beautiful intricacies of natural law—law whose order, beneficence, and evident purposefulness glorified its Ordainer" (91). McCosh could admit both of the metaphorical descriptions of nature that came from natural selection and natural theology, each perspective clarifying the other.

The integration of natural selection and natural theology would prove difficult for many of McCosh's co-religionists. Those who could not integrate natural theology and natural selection responded in various ways. Some abandoned natural theology altogether, often with a complete loss of their faith as well. Others maintained their adherence to natural theology, insisting that nature revealed God's plan and goodness. This latter group often attempted to publicly defend natural theology using one of two strategies: reinforce natural theology or attack natural selection/evolution. Many such critics of Darwin produced counter-metaphors in their defenses of natural theology, such as the metaphors of awe/wonder and fear/destruction produced by Philip Gosse, G. K. Chesterton, and Charles Spurgeon.

***Metaphors of Awe and Wonder: Philip Gosse and G. K. Chesterton***

*The Rhetoric of Gosse's "Omphalos"*

Philip Gosse was a prominent Victorian marine naturalist. As relayed by Bernard Lightman in *Victorian Popularizers of Science*, Gosse is recognized as "the first systematic popularizer of general natural history" (169). His work on marine specimens led to the creation of the aquarium, which "almost overnight . . . became a national craze" in which "the British middle class traveled to the coast to comb the beaches for specimens" (Lightman 1). Gosse's son Edmund lamented that the elder Gosse was actually responsible for the destruction of the marine world he so carefully studied. "An army of 'collectors' has passed over [the tidal pools] and ravaged every corner of them," Edmund recounts. "That my Father, himself so reverent, so conservative, had by the popularity of his books acquired the direct responsibility for a calamity that he had never

anticipated, became clear enough to him before many years had passed, and cost him great chagrin” (E. Gosse 81). According to this account by his son, Philip Gosse was well enough known as a naturalist to cause ecological damage when many of his contemporaries attempted to imitate him.

It was rather incongruent with Gosse’s religious ideology that he attained prominence. Gosse worked out his religious convictions within the Calvinist Brethren, a Christian community of relatively extreme exclusion. “So far as the [various Protestant] sects agreed with my Father and my Mother, the sects were walking in the light,” relays Edmund Gosse. “Wherever they differed from them, they had slipped more or less definitely into a penumbra of their own making” (6). Philip Gosse eventually came to the point that he “met with only a few extreme Calvinists” like himself as his source of primary social interaction (E. Gosse 7). When he did interact with others, it was often with an attitude of separation. Ann Thwaite relates that on one occasion Gosse refused to accept a dinner invitation from a Unitarian on the grounds that Scripture forbade it (206), and his son Edmund remembers that the gatherings of a local family of Baptists were seen by his father to be absolutely against the will of the Lord (141-2). In many ways, Gosse’s prominence came upon him by historical accident—he happened to be a talented naturalist in a culture clambering for scientific knowledge of the natural world.

Gosse was a strict Biblical literalist, which meant that he would have difficulty with many of the scientific theories of his time. His viewpoint on the literal nature of Scripture is seen mainly in the recollections of Edmund in *Father and Son*. “[F]or my Father,” Edmund explains, “nothing was symbolic, nothing allegorical or allusive in any



part of Scripture” (E. Gosse 41). Gosse’s adherence to a literal interpretation of Scripture extended even to apocalyptic passages, and Philip and Edmund held spirited discussions on the exact historical manner in which eschatological passages would be fulfilled (E. Gosse 44-5.) Despite the significant attack on Biblical literalism during his lifetime, Ann Thwaite relays that Gosse always maintained ““that this world, with all that it contains, was really created 6000 years ago, as the plain Word of God declares”” (315). Gosse made this statement after his own attempt to defend a literal reading of Genesis through his apologetic work *Omphalos* failed. His commitment to Biblical literalism survived even the most ardent scientific onslaughts.

Like other Biblical literalists, Gosse’s interpretation of Genesis insisted on six twenty-four hour days of creation, special creation of each form of animal, and fixity of the species. This literal interpretation of Genesis, which would become increasingly prominent within evangelicalism in the late nineteenth and throughout the twentieth centuries, was not the prominent way of viewing Genesis early in Christian history. For example, Augustine formulated in his *Confessions* a lengthy allegorical and spiritual interpretation of the Genesis account of creation. Augustine allows multiple interpretations of the creation account, insisting that there may be many “true opinion[s]” of what Moses meant when he wrote Genesis (*Confessions* 271). Following Augustine’s example, figurative interpretations of Genesis were frequent throughout the Middle Ages. A similar approach to the Biblical creation account was common within historical Judaism, as well. A figurative view of the early chapters of Genesis was advocated by Moses Maimonides, who was “perhaps the most highly revered and

authoritative rabbinical interpreter of the Torah from the 12<sup>th</sup> century up to the present” (Osborn n.p.). Maimonides viewed “the philosophic sciences as indispensable exegetic tools for bringing the inner intent of Scripture to light” (Davidson 335). Though Maimonides wrote long before Darwin, he still concluded that what was known of the physical world opposed a literal reading of the Genesis creation account and taught “that the biblical story of the creation of the world over a period of six days is not intended literally” (Davidson 337). Despite the figurative approach to Genesis in the history of both Christianity and Judaism, figurative readings would be challenged by many, especially within Christianity, as the Protestant Reformation led to increasing Biblical literalism. This historical shift toward a literal understanding of Genesis caused Darwinian evolution to be problematic to many Christians. As McGrath notes, “Darwinism became most worrisome to Christians in cultures that had been particularly influenced by literal readings of the Book of Genesis” (381). While Gosse’s adherence to Biblical literalism came early in this movement, his literal hermeneutic caused him difficulty with scientific theories of the Victorian era.

Gosse objected to the geological conclusions of Lyell rather than the natural selection of Darwin, but his focus on geology does not mean that he accepted transmutation of the species. Within *Omphalos* he takes fixity of the species as a given. Gosse published *Omphalos* prior to Darwin’s publication of the *Origin*, so at the time of his writing transmutation of the species was rejected by most scientists.

Gosse wrote *Omphalos* with a goal of nothing less than discrediting geology as a means to determine the age of the earth. Lyell’s *Principles of Geology* was a significant

problem for Gosse on two accounts. First, the old age of the earth, based on the geological data presented by Lyell, discredited a literal six-day reading of Creation and also genealogies contained within Genesis—both crucial to literal readings of Scripture that were central to Gosse’s faith. Second, as a talented naturalist, Lyell’s work was also problematic because Gosse could not deny the geological data that Lyell referred to. Gosse accepted the new facts being presented by geologists (P. Gosse 4), so that he admitted that “the records which seem legibly written on [God’s] created works do flatly contradict the statements which seem to be plainly expressed in His word” (P. Gosse 4). Gosse spends considerable time in *Omphalos* arguing against extant attempts to reconcile Scripture with geology, including the Diluvian theories, because they were scientifically untenable. He accepted the reality of the fossil record. He also refused to hide behind Diluvian theories, which he saw had little scientific merit, for how the fossils arrived in the earth. Given the challenges presented by Lyell’s theory, Gosse was compelled to find a solution lest he be forced to abandon either his faith or his scientific standards. Eventually Gosse developed a theory that quieted the disturbances of his own mind. In writing *Omphalos* he offered his solution to other “thousands of thinking persons who are scarcely satisfied with the extant reconciliations of Scriptural statements and Geological deduction—who are silenced but not convinced” (viii). In his attack on geological deductions, Gosse offers a combination of scientific and philosophical arguments against Lyell’s account of the age of the earth.

What is notable from the standpoint of this study is the metaphorical language that Gosse uses. For Gosse, Lyell threatens natural theology because his theory suggests

that nature contradicts Scripture—the “book of God’s words”— and thus makes anything present in nature useless for understanding of God. Gosse is defending the view of natural theology in which Scripture takes far greater precedence than “the book of God’s works” in nature. I will give a brief summary of Gosse’s work and then evaluate his use of metaphor.

It is difficult to summarize *Omphalos*. As Ann Thwaite describes it, “no paraphrase can do it justice” (214). Gosse gives his own greatly reduced summary as follows: “All organic nature moves in a circle. Creation is a violent irruption into the circle of nature” (qtd in Thwaite 214). Gosse based his theory on the notion that the circular life-cycles of both plants and animals, beginning in germinal states, progressing through maturation, and then beginning again with reproduction, is a fixed law of nature. There is not a single living thing that does not follow this circular life-cycle. Given the necessity of ongoing circularity, Gosse poses the problem of where in the life-cycle the history of any given organism can be said to begin. Gosse proposes that it is “the order of all organic nature” that “once we are in any portion of [the life cycle] we find ourselves running in a circular groove, as endless as the course of a blind horse in a mill” (122). “It is evident,” concludes Gosse, “that there is no one point in the history of any single creature, which is a legitimate beginning of existence” (122). At the sudden act of Creation, which Gosse takes as a given, a single moment of the life-cycle of every living thing came into physical existence. The earlier parts of the life-cycle, however, still existed. Indeed, Gosse argues, they *must* have existed, for we cannot conceive of a cow, for example, that had not previously been an embryo. If God created a cow in mature

form, the embryo still existed, but it existed immaterially, before time began. Gosse calls this a prochronic existence, which is before time and dwells only in the mind of God. Thus, the earth will have an appearance of an antiquity that is not real but that reflects the existence of all things in the eternal mind of God. At creation, God's mind became manifest. Within his mind, the life-cycles of all living things had been going on for eternity past. Gosse declares that "the Creator had before his mind a projection of the whole life-history of the globe" which "lay like a map before his infinite mind" (349). The previous parts of the life-cycles of each created thing were given physical being, as well, accounting for the apparent age of the earth and the presence of the fossils.

Gosse claims that the physical creation of previous parts of the life-cycle was not arbitrary. He anticipates that some will claim that his theory suggests God formed "objects whose sole purpose was to deceive us" (347). Indeed, Gosse notes that some "simple-minded observers" had "been inclined to take refuge from the conclusion of geology in the absolute sovereignty of God, asking,--'Could not the Omnipotent Creator make the fossils in the strata, just as they now appear'" (368). Gosse's theory of prochronism is different in his mind because in it God acts according to natural law, or the necessarily circular life-cycle of all organisms.

Gosse's theory in *Omphalos* was complex. It prompted Charles Kingsley to tell Gosse "that in twenty-five years he had read 'no other book which so staggered and puzzled'" him (Thwaite 223). This was due in part to the fact that Gosse attempted to combine abstract philosophical ideas about the nature of God's mind with detailed

scientific data. As a naturalist, Gosse was widely knowledgeable on the life-cycles of both plants and animals. Gosse gives extensive examples of how his theory would be observed in a great variety of species. At the beginning of *Omphalos* he also details the current geological findings and reviews the theories that had attempted to account for them within a young earth paradigm. In these aspects, *Omphalos* reads very much like a scientific paper. However, Gosse also employs significant amounts of metaphorical language in his attempt to persuade about his scientific and philosophical theory. It is within this poetic language that Gosse employs metaphor in order to reaffirm the preeminence of natural theology.

Gosse believed that the earth was the literal physical manifestation of God's mind. Consistent with the long history of the tradition of natural theology, he calls the earth a "stone book" (371) in which the thoughts of the author-God are recorded via the fossils within the geological strata. *Omphalos* acts as a kind of tour guide to the day of Creation, for which Gosse employs rich language and metaphor in order to convey the greatness of being able to observe God's mind through the wonders of plant and animal life. Gosse's use of poetic language, particularly metaphor, imbues his work with an unmistakable sense of wonder. I will consider a number of these passages.

Gosse organizes his argument by giving descriptions of organisms that progress from least to most complex. As Gosse moves his treatise from the observation of plant to animal life, he exclaims:

Let us look for animals. We retrace our steps to the verge of the rippling sea, where the belt of umbrageous Mangroves fringes its margin.

Beneath the arching roots of these are now reposing in the warm sunlit shallows many creatures which number this as the first day of their existence. (182)

In this passage Gosse is beginning the discussion of invertebrate sea creatures, but he presents an image of peaceful sunbathers enjoying the “sunlit shallows” of the “rippling sea.” This language insists that nature is an orderly place of repose for the creatures that manifest God’s eternal mind. Later, returning his tour to an organism in the ocean, he anthropomorphizes the sea:

Hark to that hollow roar! There is no mistaking that majestic sound. It is the voice of the many-sounding sea. Yonder through the trees we catch a glimpse of its shining face, and here we are at the verge of the cliffs, against whose feet the waves are breaking in white foam. (215)

The sea is given “majestic voice” and a “shining face,” evoking beauty of both sound and figure. This metaphor anthropomorphizes an aspect of nature, as does natural selection, but Gosse’s description does not give nature deified power. The sea is merely given a voice. Given Gosse’s argument that the earth reveals God’s mind, the voice of the sea enables it to become an agent of worship.

Gosse’s poetic language is also used in reference to the many animals that he considers. In one passage he attributes the features of a warrior to the crocodile:

Here crouches, among the thick reeds, the Leviathan of the rivers, the mailed Crocodile. His body, invested with bony ridged plates, that rise into strong serrations along the tail, seems clothed with power; and his

long rows of interlocking teeth, unveiled by lips, appear grinning with perpetual rage. (248)

Similar to the image of the crocodile as a soldier, to the ibex Gosse attributes the form of a protective king, standing as “a watchful sentinel” over his herd, wearing a crown of “noble horns, which are at once his defense and his pride” (257). The metaphors of soldier and king associated with the crocodile and ibex do grant these creatures an image of power, but it is a protective power. Once again, similar to the sea, despite being anthropomorphized these aspects of nature do not compete with God but rather do his work. Kings and soldiers represent and defend their people. Based on my application of Lakoff and Johnson in experienced metaphor, I posited that that the images of natural theology—a book and a watch—suggest the possession of a valuable object. Gosse’s images of king and soldier work to offer security for those possessions. In these examples of metaphor, which are not exhaustive, Gosse uses poetic style and metaphor to convey a sense of wonder at the creatures he describes. A crocodile, “grinning in perpetual rage,” must not be taken for granted, for he is nothing less than the physical form of God’s mind.

Gosse also employs literary elements that place his reader within a virtual drama in *Omphalos*. He directly addresses the reader, asking him “to accompany me in an ideal tour of inspection among the creatures, taking up each for examination” (128). Another character then joins the drama. Gosse calls on a botanist to accompany himself and the reader (128), and the imagined botanist



even enters into dialogue with his companions. At one point, the figure of the botanist produces a circular saw, “which I always carry about with me for investigations” (179), which he uses to examine the inside of a tree trunk. Later, as Gosse considers the shark, standing on the “promontory” from which “we can look far down into the clear profundity of the still and smooth sea” (240), he insists that the reader not merely observe but also consider a potential interaction with the shark. “Let us go down and look in his mouth. . . . Is not this an awful array of knives and lancets? Is not this the case of surgical instruments enough to make you shudder? What would be the amputation of your leg to this row of triangular scalpels” (243)? By the use of second person, the inclusion of other characters, and the vivid description of the scenery, Gosse creates a sense of an unfolding drama in which the reader participates.

Gosse’s treatment of time and use of metaphor provide his defense of natural theology. He invites the audience to experience, in the present moment—not a remembered past or imagined future—the wonder inherent in nature. His language invests nature with images of beauty, worship, and protective power. As already noted, Gosse’s conclusion in *Omphalos* is that the earth is a stone book that reveals the mind of God. His overt use of the metaphor of a book, as well as his own metaphors of awe and wonder encourage a similar positive emotional experience of nature, which I have previously shown to be inherent in the experience of natural theology. Gosse’s appeal to emotion through metaphor thus reinforces and defends natural theology.

*Wonder in Chesterton's "Ethics of Elfland"*

Like Gosse, G. K. Chesterton created metaphors of wonder in *Orthodoxy*.

Chesterton is often characterized by the diversity of roles that he filled as a writer. He wrote everything from foreign war correspondence to mystery novels. For the purposes of this study, Chesterton is pertinent in his role as a Christian apologist. Chesterton's form of apologetics was unusual, not built on the kind of logical evidentiary arguments typically thought of as apologetics. Though he engaged in public debate and wrote a great deal of work in which he defends his traditional Christian views, he did so using a strategy of wit and paradox. Chesterton "perceived paradoxes in reality and described them using paradoxical language and analogies," which was also "true of his apologetical style" (Perrin 198). He actually found traditional apologetics of little help and went "so far as to say that he strove to avoid even reading Christian apologetics" (Perrin 198). Despite his avowed distaste for apologetics and his unusual style, he constantly attempted in his many works to give defense for the Christian faith and explain his own views on life.

One of the more clearly apologetic of his works is *Orthodoxy*, in which he proposes to show that Christianity is the only way in which one is able to make sense of the realities of the world. It is in this book that Chesterton defends natural theology against a competing metaphorical view of nature. Chesterton, an eventual convert to Roman Catholicism, was not a Biblical literalist and had no problem with the empirical theory of natural selection. What he did object to, however, was Spencer's brand of what can be termed "Scientism." Scientism is the "label for an intellectual imperialism

that makes ever greater demands in the name of science” (Jaki 29) in a way that is “to [sic] far beyond its purely quantitative relevance” (Jaki 30). This kind of popular science, as promoted by men such as Spencer and Haeckel, led to “blind determinism, intellectual imperialism if not plain tyranny, and . . . stifling hopelessness” (Keats 331). It was the view of nature as a purely mechanistic struggle for survival that Chesterton attacked. In doing so, similar to Gosse, he employed metaphors that reinforced the idea of nature as a valuable possession that was so integral to natural theology. Chesterton argues for natural theology in the chapter in *Orthodoxy* entitled “Ethics of Elfland.”

“Ethics of Elfland” describes Chesterton’s sense of wonder at the world. For Chesterton, this wonder is similar to the wonder present in the fairy tales of his childhood, in which anything may be possible. While scientific laws are given to explain the necessity of physical actions, such as the law of gravity insisting that an apple will fall to the ground, Chesterton claims that “there are no laws, but only weird repetitions” (48). He does not accept the fact that because a physical act has always been observed, it follows that it *must* occur. Science has formed a kind of “scientific fatalism” in which it insists “that everything is as it must always have been, being unfolded without fault from the beginning” (Chesterton 56). Chesterton says that this scientific fatalism describes something that is dead; he counters that the world is not dead and predictable, but alive with possibilities. The leaf on the tree should be appreciated for its green-ness by virtue of the fact that it might have been something else, but is not (Chesterton 56). The repetitions of the universe need not be seen as the result of inevitable laws, for it could equally be that God simply repeats the same actions

in the world over and over again, unvarying, because he likes it. Chesterton muses that it “may not be automatic necessity that makes all daisies alike; it may be that God makes every daisy separately, but has never got tired of making them” (58). Chesterton sees the world as wild and beautiful, and he describes it with words and phrases such as “magic” (62) and “fairy tale” (48). Chesterton is “frightfully fond of the universe” (61) because it is “beautiful in its old design” (63).

Chesterton ultimately condenses his wonder at life in the image of a jewel. “I felt and feel that life itself is as bright as the diamond,” he muses (54). Later, he consolidates this thought further into his primary metaphor: “For the universe is a single jewel, and while it is natural cant to talk of a jewel as peerless and priceless, of this jewel it is literally true. This cosmos is indeed without peer and without price: for there cannot be another” (63). Chesterton’s idea that the universe is a priceless jewel clearly reiterates the commonly held image within natural theology of nature as a valuable possession. Developing the idea of the value of the universe as a possession, Chesterton clarifies that it is “priceless” (63), indicating that it is not simply something to own but also to be enjoyed and cared for. Once again we see in Chesterton the production of a metaphor that reinforces the positive experience of the metaphor of natural theology. Given the choice presented by Chesterton—nature as a dead machine or as a priceless jewel—the latter metaphor appeals to security and status and argues for the superiority of natural theology.

The works by Gosse and Chesterton considered here reveal the use of metaphors of awe and wonder to defend the metaphorical view of nature most often associated with

natural theology: that nature reveals God's ongoing personal work among humankind and proves his goodness. An alternate approach to the defense of natural theology consists of attack upon the ideas associated with Darwinian evolution. I will next consider a sermon by Charles Spurgeon in which he clearly employs a rhetoric of fear in an attempt to combat evolution, creating counter-metaphors of evolution as a source of sin and as a doorway to destruction.

***The Rhetoric of Fear: Spurgeon's "Hideous Discovery"***

Spurgeon became one of the most recognized and popular preachers in London, preaching for over thirty years to "over five thousand people in both the morning and evening services" at his church on a Sunday (Ellison 86). Beyond the faithful attendees of the Metropolitan Tabernacle where he was pastor, he also held something of celebrity status for travelers to London. Robert Ellison relays that Spurgeon actually became "one of the foremost tourist attractions in London" (86). For those who could not hear Spurgeon in person, his sermons were also printed and published widely in both Great Britain and the United States; in these combined markets millions of copies of his sermons were sold (Ellison 87). The sermons were also translated into many languages. One contemporary reviewer of Spurgeon's work believed "that they will ultimately be accepted as incomparably the greatest contribution to the literature of experimental Christianity that has been made in this century" (qtd in Ellison 88). There is no question that Spurgeon's eloquence on theological matters made him one of the more widely known figures of the Victorian Era.

Spurgeon was, like Gosse, a strict Biblical literalist, insisting on a literal reading of the Genesis creation account of six twenty-four hour days, the historical death and resurrection of Christ for salvation, and the historical fulfillment of the events of Revelation, among other accounts. Spurgeon's commitment to Biblical literalism can be seen in his response to the threat to Scripture that was coming from the onslaught of Higher Criticism. He was the center of a controversy within his own Baptist denomination, called the "Down-Grade Controversy" (E. Bacon 128), in which Spurgeon insisted that some Baptist ministers required censure for liberalism in their theology. Spurgeon published a magazine, *The Sword and Trowel*, which printed an article during the controversy outlining the "ways in which unsound doctrine and heresy can obtain a foothold in the churches" (E. Bacon 130). High among these concerns for Spurgeon was loss of belief in the literal truth of Scripture. The article "dealt mainly with the inspiration and authority of the Scriptures, with nearly half of the confession given to that subject" (Swanson, n.p.). Spurgeon was so committed to his stance for Biblical literalism against that of others in his denomination that he chose to withdraw from the Baptist Union rather than be aligned with those who did not share his view of Scripture (E. Bacon 134). Like Gosse, Spurgeon's literal hermeneutics would place him at odds with scientific theories that questioned his interpretation of Genesis. Unlike Gosse, Spurgeon continued public comment on such issues well after Darwin published the *Origin*, so he dealt more specifically with natural selection.

Spurgeon commented widely on issues surrounding Darwinian evolution in his sermons and letters, so it is difficult to reduce his views to any one work. The 1886

sermon “Hideous Discovery” is a good representative of his language and views. Within this sermon Spurgeon is pointed on the evils of Darwinian evolution. Delivered almost thirty years after the publication of the *Origin*, it offers a well-developed viewpoint—not only of his views but those of his followers, as well. In this sermon Spurgeon speaks on a short New Testament passage that records words of Jesus.

In the biblical passage on which “Hideous Discovery” is based, Mark 7:20-23, Jesus gives a list of sins that originate within a person. In the American King James Version, used by Spurgeon in this sermon, the text reads:

And He said, That which comes out of the man, that defiles the man. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: all these things come from within and defile the man. (qtd. in Spurgeon 1)

Jesus’ main point in this passage seems to be that sin is more than merely external action but actually derives from within a person. Spurgeon takes the list of sins as progressive, “for it begins with thoughts and then it runs on until it lands in utter lack of thought, or foolishness” (2). According to Spurgeon, evil thoughts, as the first of the progression, are not to be “lightly regarded” (2) because they result in the inevitable onslaught of the other sins.

Given the destructive nature of evil thoughts in his progressive reading of the passage, it is surprising that at first Spurgeon actually does not give any specific examples of evil thoughts. He is content to summarize “evil and vain thoughts” as those

“which quibble at the revealed Truth of God and would improve upon the Infallible declaration of Jehovah” (2). In this commentary we can see Spurgeon’s commitment to Scripture as the authoritative source for all True thought. Any thought that questions Scripture, as it eventually came to be canonized well after the passage in Mark from which he preaches, is not merely wrong but evil. Early in the sermon, Spurgeon declares that people “are diseased to the heart with sin and ready to die and pass before the Judgment Seat to receive . . . condemnation” (1). This teaching is consistent with the evangelical conviction that each person must find salvation from his or her sins in the atonement of Jesus. Otherwise, as Spurgeon notes, sins lead to judgment and destruction. Sin, as noted in the text of Mark, proceeds from evil thoughts.

Strictly speaking, the Scripture passage of the sermon has no relation to Darwinian theory on evolution. It does not relate to Biblical teaching on origins or age of the earth. Nevertheless Spurgeon discusses evolution about halfway into his sermon, which I quote at length:

Another fine theory of modern times is disproved in our text. According to this evolution doctrine, as applied to theology, the new birth is a development of that which is in the heart. I hope we may be spared such births and evolutions! According to this theory we have had some fine specimens of regenerate people of late, for we have heard of evolutions of developments which have brought out from within evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications and wickednesses of more than average proportions! God save us from all the development of the sin which



dwells in man! Philosophically the dogma of evolution is a dream, a theory without a vestige of proof! Within 50 years, children in school will read of extraordinary popular delusions and this will be mentioned as one of the most absurd of them! Many a merry jest will be uttered bearing upon the follies of science in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. In its bearing upon religion, this vain notion is however, no theme for mirth, for it is not only deceptive, but it threatens to be mischievous in a high degree. There is not a hair of truth on this dog from its head to its tail, but it rends and tears the simple ones. In all its bearings upon Scriptural Truth, the evolution theory is in direct opposition to it! If God's Word is true, evolution is a lie! I will not mince the matter—this is not the time for soft speaking. (5)

Spurgeon introduces the above passage in response to the hypothetical suggestion that “the life may be impure and yet the heart is good” (5). According to Spurgeon's depiction here, evolution teaches that each human progresses toward greater moral perfection in “a development of that which is naturally within the heart” (5). The introduction of evolution at this point in his sermon is rather abrupt. It reads as an aside, akin to, “And by the way, this passage shows us that people don't go from worse to better, but from sin to worse sin. There is no such thing as the world getting slowly better!” In reality, Spurgeon's characterization of evolution here has nothing to do with Darwin's empirical theory on species variation through natural selection but rather refers to the application of the idea of progression, or evolution with improvement, to the

realm of morality. Darwin's association with progressionism had been used by many as ongoing support for the idea of progressive moral and cultural evolution. Though this idea of moral progression had been prominent before Darwin, particularly in eighteenth century historical accounts of civilization as well as in Calvinist providentialism, Spurgeon indicates that the idea of moral progression was applied in an additional way after Darwin. According to Spurgeon's comments, some interpreters of Darwin claimed that moral progression occurred within individuals over the course of their lifetime, which mirrored the process that occurred in the biological species over the ages. Spurgeon notes that his passage contradicts the idea of moral progression within a particular human being. Spurgeon's aside, in which he refers to "this evolution doctrine" (5), then moves on to the legitimate challenge that Darwin's theory poses to Spurgeon's form of Biblical interpretation. After derisively characterizing evolution as an "extraordinary popular delusion" which will result in "many a merry jest," Spurgeon checks his jovial treatment of the matter. The subject is "no theme for mirth" because evolution contradicts God's word, is "deceptive," and "threatens to be mischievous in a high degree" (5).

Spurgeon's reasoning within this sermon creates a metaphorical description of his concept of evolution. Early in his sermon he develops the idea that evil thoughts are the root of all sin and that sin leads to destruction. His progressive reading of the sins listed in the biblical text suggests the image of a pathway, with each sin leading forward to the next. At the beginning of this pathway stands "evil thoughts," which begins the progression along the path of evil. This teaching may be described by the metaphor *evil*

*thoughts are a doorway to destruction.* Spurgeon does not explicitly state this metaphor, but it encompasses his teaching. Later in his text, Spurgeon equates evil thoughts, the root of all sin, with any thought contrary to Scripture. “Thinking contrary to God’s mind and disputing with the clear statements of God’s own Word may be the first step in a descent which shall end in everlasting destruction” (3). Further development of Spurgeon’s argument expands the metaphor *evil thoughts are a doorway to destruction* to become *thoughts contrary to God’s word are a doorway to destruction.* Once Spurgeon defines evolution as contrary to the word of God, his teaching on the topic becomes *evolution is a doorway to destruction.* While the concept of evolution was hailed by others as positive through both the metaphor of progress and Darwin’s own epic presentation of it, Spurgeon attempts to counter this by equating evolution with destruction. He argues that the progression is downward, toward destruction, rather than toward greater good and development. Spurgeon accesses a long metaphorical history associated with a term, but attempts to create a counter-metaphor that warns his audience away from acceptance of the theory.

Spurgeon’s aim in “Hideous Discovery,” the rejection of evil thoughts contrary to Scripture—most prominently evolution—is based on an appeal to fear, which is apparent in his own use of metaphorical language. We have already seen how he checks himself when he allows humor to come into his sermon, yet he not only ceases his “mirth” but also immediately creates an image of danger. Evolution is depicted as a “dog” upon which “there is not a hair of truth . . . from its head to its tail” (5). Lest the image should fail in its effect, Spurgeon warns that this dog is vicious, for “it rends and

tears the simple ones” (5). Spurgeon pictures evolution as a vicious dog attacking a child, tearing her to pieces. Elsewhere in the sermon Spurgeon applies similar images of fear or destruction to “evil thoughts,” of which evolution is the only specifically named example. Evil thoughts are seen as “unclean birds that find a cage within the human heart” (8), which evokes the image of carrion trapped in the human soul. Sin, “rising in evil thought,” flows “through a black country full of varying immoralities until it falls into the Dead Sea of ‘foolishness’” (3). This image presents a wasteland and stagnation. Similarly, evil thoughts are “rivers of pollution” (4) and “poisons in the air deadly to all who breathe them” (4). By connecting evil thoughts, most prominently evolution, to pictures of destruction, death, and decay, Spurgeon creates images of fear which are obviously to be avoided. In his conclusion, listeners are urged to “accept the old and tried everlasting Gospel,” which requires that “no new theories” be admitted (8), a doctrine consistent with later evangelical ideas on the interpretation of Scripture. By his use of metaphor Spurgeon sets up a strict dichotomy: acceptance of “the clear statements of God’s own Word” (3) or acceptance of evil thoughts, associated with death and destruction. When evolution is specifically named as an evil thought, the resultant destruction is particularly violent—to be torn to pieces by a beast.

Spurgeon’s rhetoric in “Hideous Discovery” is similar to the previously considered approaches of Gosse and Chesterton in that he uses metaphor to make his appeal for natural theology and against evolution. However, Spurgeon produces a fear-based counter-metaphor of “evolution as destruction,” which directly opposes the prominent metaphor of “evolution as progress” that was circulating widely in Victorian

culture. To return to my idea of experienced metaphor, the result of Spurgeon's images of death and destruction will be something more than just mental contemplation. His images evoke fear as the appropriate response to the idea of evolution and will make a dispassionate Burkean combination of this "viewpoint" with Spencer's and Darwin's difficult.

Spurgeon's language in "Hideous Discovery" also casts acceptance or rejection of evolution as a once-for-all choice. In reality, an opinion is not a one-time event—a person's opinion on the merits of Darwin's theory of evolution can change over time. However, Spurgeon's metaphors promote the idea that rejection of evolution needs to occur in the present moment and must be irrevocable. His language discourages his audience from even contemplating the new theory. Most prominently, entering the "doorway" of evolution results in inevitable destruction. For the Christian who wants to avoid destruction, evolution is to be labeled as an evil thought and forever sealed away from further consideration.

In depicting the acceptance or rejection of evolution as a one-for-all choice, Spurgeon's metaphors make use of the rhetorical strategy that Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca describe as the *locus* of the irreparable. J. Robert Cox notes that the "object or act which qualifies as irreparable is necessarily unique" and "cannot be restored" (229). Additionally, the irreparable is characterized by precariousness (Cox 230). Spurgeon speaks of the unique fate of the eternal soul, hanging precariously in the balance between eternal destruction and salvation. While the *locus* of the irreparable usually results in heightened information seeking before a decision is made (Cox 234),

Spurgeon's metaphors, particularly that of a vicious dog, appeal to fear in his audience and stress urgency in the decision regarding evolution. Cox argues that "images of death, denial, separation, or loss" result in a heightened sense of the timeliness of a choice or action (231). Spurgeon's images confirm that images of death urge timely action. A vicious beast today will still be a vicious beast tomorrow and can only be avoided if kept behind a strong barrier. Avoidance provides the only assurance of safety and, ultimately, salvation.

As Perelman notes, "the effect of argument which makes use of [the locus of the irreparable] can be overwhelming" (91). Spurgeon's use of the *locus* of the irreparable, which promotes absolute and final rejection of evolution, would have profound effects on the way that the discourse on evolution would be approached by his audience.

### ***The Fate of Darwin's Theory***

Though it is often assumed that Darwin's theory of natural selection was met with full acceptance in the scientific world, in reality the empirical facts described by natural selection were not well accepted by biologists after his publication of the *Origin*. Without the mechanisms that would later be discovered through the study of genetics, most scientists in the nineteenth century did not accept that natural selection was capable of doing all that Darwin claimed it could. Darwin was widely hailed as giving credibility to transmutation of the species and as elevating the idea to a matter for serious empirical study, but natural selection was by no means the new paradigm. "Objections logically fatal to the theory were voiced by scientists" within less than a decade of the *Origin's* publication (Campbell "Ancestry" 2), and most scientists felt that

natural selection had been disproved. Even Thomas Huxley, the famous champion of Darwin and evolution, did not accept or teach natural selection (Ruse *Evolution* 94).

While most scientists in the twentieth century would eventually conclude that Darwin had been right in his theory of natural selection, the only thing that Darwin convinced most of his contemporaries of was that the idea of transmutation was probable.

Campbell argues that while Darwin was indeed successful, it “was very much a victory over the imagination,” not the empirical (“Ancestry” 2). The relative scientific failure of natural selection means that in the decades after Darwin, “evolution” and did not refer to an accepted empirical theory.

Prior to Darwin, nature had been seen as the revealer of God’s order and goodness, and evolution had been seen as an unfolding progress. Darwin’s theory of natural selection became another metaphorical, and for many a metaphysical, understanding of nature. Some took natural selection to prove nature was an anti-theological apologist or violent struggle. Others, such as Gosse, Chesterton, and Spurgeon, produced further counter-metaphors in order to urge their audiences to maintain the view of nature consistent with natural theology. This study shows that metaphor has long dominated the discourse surrounding Darwin.

This dominance by metaphor has not been well-recognized outside of academia, and often goes unrecognized in many academic disciplines as well. Whether those involved in the debates over religion and Darwin are aware of it or not, many arguments about the purported facts of Darwinian theory are not about fact or science at all but are about maintaining a particular metaphorical understanding of nature or evolution that is

consistent with the arguer's beliefs. The counter-metaphors examined in this study confirm this conclusion. Though Gosse was a scientist purportedly offering a scientific case against geology, he did not really produce an empirical theory. Instead, Gosse used his detailed scientific descriptions to develop a rhetorical defense of the idea that nature revealed God's mind and perfect work. Ultimately, the absence of a scientific theory was the primary reason that *Omphalos* was so completely rejected in the scientific world. Similarly, Spurgeon claims in "Hideous Discovery" to be combating the scientific concept of evolution. He insists that evolution has no proof—a term which attempts to take the discussion to an empirical realm—but Spurgeon's discourse offers no scientific details. Instead, Spurgeon relies solely on his metaphors, which evoke negative emotion in relation to evolution.

Metaphorical understandings of nature and evolution were prominent both before and after Darwin published the *Origin*; they continue into the present. The ongoing presence of metaphor continues to influence the discourses surrounding evolution and the Christian faith. I will conclude this study with a brief consideration of the ongoing presence of the metaphors of awe/wonder and of sin/destruction that were identified in the works of Gosse, Chesterton, and Spurgeon.



## V. CONCLUSION

I have shown in this study that responses to the ideas of Darwinian evolution are largely about maintaining a particular metaphorical view of nature. Those Christians contemporary with Darwin who resisted evolutionary theory, such as Gosse, Chesterton, and Spurgeon, produced their own counter-metaphors in the attempt to defend natural theology. The metaphors identified here continue to influence the debates over Darwin within Christianity today. Most prominently, Spurgeon's metaphors of sin and destruction, which we have seen generate powerful emotional responses, have been very influential. Spurgeon's prominence and influence in his own day continues in many Christian circles today. He is viewed by many as a model preacher and defender of the Bible. Spurgeon's sermons can be accessed in their entirety via the website of the Creation Science group *Answers in Genesis*. "Hideous Discovery" is quoted by the group's founder on the same site (see Ham). Based on Spurgeon's continued prominence, it is not surprising that metaphors of sin/destruction in relation to evolution continue in Christian discourse. For example, one prominent player in the current Darwin debates within Christianity claims that "[t]heistic evolution takes the Darwinian picture of the biological world and baptizes it" (qtd in Olasky 38). The use of baptism in this quote continues the metaphorical connection of Darwin/evolution with sin and destruction, as baptism within the Christian tradition is associated with cleansing from sin. The metaphor of sin and destruction continues to promote fear and total rejection as the appropriate response to evolution, as it did when Spurgeon used it.

Likewise, metaphors of awe/wonder are notable in the ongoing debate over Darwin within Christianity today. Frances Collins, a prominent promoter of theistic evolution and current president of the NIH, depicts the process of natural selection as “the language of God” written through the script of DNA (see Collins, *Language*). For Collins, God speaks a language of wonder, and it is this language of wonder in the natural world that leads one to belief. Another group, the *Vibrant Dance Initiative*, promotes “a gracious dialogue” by evangelical Christians on interpretations of Genesis and the role of Darwinian evolution (Vibrant, n.p.). This group depicts science and faith as a “vibrant dance,” each working together to reveal the Truths of the world. The image of a “vibrant dance” suggests beauty and grace and generates emotions of awe and wonder.

The ongoing presence of the metaphors produced by Gosse, Chesterton, and Spurgeon suggests that twentieth century acceptance of the empirical facts of natural selection has not changed the metaphorical landscape of the debates about Darwin. If we want to better understand the way in which people discourse about Darwinian evolution and its relation to matters of faith, we must identify the metaphors in which their discourse is rooted. Once these metaphors are identified, the model of experienced metaphor can be used to analyze the emotional response these metaphors create, and thus their rhetorical implications. Rhetoricians need to be recognized by scientists, theologians, politicians, and other contributors to the debates over Darwin as having a more prominent role within this seemingly intransigent debate. While it is not the role of the rhetorician to settle disputes, they can offer a much greater understanding of the

way in which the debate about Darwinian evolution and Christianity is influenced by the presence of metaphorical language.

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